



Real Possibilities in

Connecticut

Labor Committee

March 8, 2016

Testimony from Carol Ann Feldman, a Family Caregiver, in Support of
Raised Senate Bill #221

An Act Concerning Paid Family Medical Leave

Good afternoon, my name is Carol Ann Feldman; I am a resident of West Hartford and an AARP volunteer. I would like to thank the Labor Committee members for affording me the opportunity to appear before you today and express my support of S.B. 221, An Act Concerning Paid Family Medical Leave.

I could never have anticipated a scenario where my 40 year old sister, who was residing in Massachusetts with her two teenaged daughters, would suffer a debilitating stroke. My husband and I were her closest family members and had to assume the caregiving, child rearing and day to day household responsibilities that resulted from her illness. It

became evident immediately after her diagnosis that one of us needed to temporarily relocate to MA to take on these challenges. I approached my employer at that time about the possibility of taking a three month unpaid leave of absence and was fortunate and grateful that my request was granted. This unpaid leave was a godsend as it allowed me the time needed to: coordinate my sister's rehabilitation; take care of her finances; submit an SSI application for benefits on her behalf; work with her medical team on an ongoing care plan; and, coordinate a support system so that my nieces could remain at home with their mother. During the next few years, my sister suffered two more strokes, as well as numerous related medical issues. Over the years, my nieces and I have all faced the dilemma of having to take unpaid periods of time off from our jobs to meet my sister's caregiving needs.

It is important to note, that while I was very fortunate to be given the opportunity to take unpaid time off to care for my sister there was always the underlying concern about my

job security. Additionally, my husband and I suffered financially due to my absences from work, and we had to make adjustments to our household finances in order to meet our monthly expenses. We were more than happy to do so and are very fortunate that my sister is doing well in an assisted living facility here in CT. This experience has taught us all that you can never fully understand all of the consequences, both emotional and financial, that a long term illness can have on a family until you experience it first-hand.

Had a bill such as S.B. 221 been in effect it would have helped ease our financial burden and provided us with some financial security. I strongly urge you to consider the Family Medical Leave Insurance Task Force recommendations and pass this bill during this legislative session.

Thank you for your consideration.